

# MEDIA TIPS

## Speaking Effectively with the Media About *Recovery Month*

As you promote your activities during *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)*, you may generate opportunities to tell your story to local media through in-person or telephone interviews. Reporters normally conduct interviews to gather background information when developing their stories; this provides an excellent opportunity for you to share your point of view. These interviews may be used in newspaper articles or be featured as part of radio shows; commercial, public, and cable television shows; talk shows; or news programs.

Below are six tips for making the most of a media interview, as well as some key points for communicating with reporters about *Recovery Month*.

### Making the Most of a Media Interview

1. **Keep it simple.** Identify, in advance, up to four key points you want to convey in your interview and stick to them. Cluttering your interview with numerous messages can be confusing.
2. **Get right to the point.** Reporters generally do not have time to sit through lengthy statements. First, present the most important points briefly, then ask the reporter if you should elaborate on any of them.
3. **Remember your audience.** Your interviewer, like the general public, likely does not spend as much time thinking about substance use disorders as you do. Avoid using terms or acronyms unfamiliar to those outside the field; be prepared to explain basic facts about substance use disorders and treatment.
4. **Make yourself useful.** Offer to locate additional experts and arrange for the reporter to speak with them after your interview is complete. If you do not know an answer to a reporter's question, offer to research it and get back to the reporter right away with the answer.
5. **Practice.** If you rehearse, you are more likely to state your key points clearly during your interview. You also may want to anticipate likely media questions and prepare appropriate responses.
6. **Adhere to anonymity traditions, if applicable.** Individuals coming forward about their experiences in recovery can speak with the media without violating the "anonymity" practice of traditional mutual support groups. Many of these groups permit people to share their stories as long as their membership in the group is not disclosed.

## Key Points to Convey to Media During *Recovery Month*

You may wish to customize the following four points to use as the basis of your media interviews:

1. [Your organization's name] is holding [event] on [date/time] at [location] to [encourage others to seek treatment for substance use disorders/educate employers about drug-free workplace programs/talk about how substance use disorders are medical conditions, just as diabetes and heart disease are, to help overcome discrimination in the workplace against people in recovery/other reason] so that more area residents with substance use disorders will have access to treatment programs, particularly through their employers.
2. Locally, more than [number] of [city]'s residents experience substance use disorders annually, yet only an estimated [number] have received treatment. There is help for people with substance use disorders and their family members, and it is healthy and productive to identify when help is needed and refer people in need to treatment and recovery support services. [To obtain localized information, contact the Single-State Agency (SSA) in your state, which is listed in the SSA Directory included in the "Resources" section of this planning toolkit. Inquire about both public and private patient census information. More state and local information is found in the *2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings*, published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.]
3. Treatment programs, such as [name program in your community], offer a broad array of individualized treatment services and provide a continuum of care. Often, individuals need family counseling, job training, or help paying for needed services, and these programs can help connect people with these services.
4. [Your organization's name]'s activities coincide with the 16<sup>th</sup> annual observance this September of *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month*, a nationwide celebration of those in recovery from substance use disorders, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This year's theme is "*Join the Voices for Recovery: Healing Lives, Families, and Communities.*"

You are encouraged to share your plans and activities for *Recovery Month* 2005 with SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, your colleagues, and the general public by posting them on the official *Recovery Month* Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov).

We would like to know about your outreach efforts and community success stories during *Recovery Month*. Please complete the Customer Satisfaction Form enclosed in this planning toolkit. Directions are included on the form.

Please send any of your organization's *Recovery Month* promotional samples to:  
Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment,  
1 Choke Cherry Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Rockville, MD 20857.

Sample *Recovery Month* materials are available electronically on the CD-ROM enclosed in this planning toolkit. For additional *Recovery Month* materials, visit our Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) or call 1-800-662-HELP.